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Epistemic and Pedagogical Beliefs towards ICT in Classroom Integration of Chiang Rai CFL Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teaching practice gets influenced from teacher's beliefs. Teachers' epistemic and pedagogical beliefs affect to their ways of using tool in classroom. This has been tested in China, Singapore, Taiwan and Turkey. This paper is a study that was conducted a qualitative research by interviewing teachers from 5 schools to find more details on the three beliefs of Thai teachers who teach Chinese as a foreign language (CFL). The findings indicates that the CFL teachers have positive thinking about using technology; they aware of a constructivism but because of the culture barriers they still remain in their traditional teaching approach.

Keywords: Epistemic beliefs, Pedagogical Beliefs, ICT Beliefs, Qualitative Research, CFL.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' beliefs affect their teaching practice (Abdelraheem, 2004; Richardson, 1996). Understand their beliefs and relation between them could help to improve their teaching practice (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002; Wu, Palmer, & Field, 2011). Chinese classes has become wide spread e.g. in Asian countries. Therefore, it is important to study and improve quality of teaching Chinese for CFL teachers.

Studies of the relations among epistemological, pedagogical and technology use had been conducted in Singapore, Taiwan, Turkey, and South-China; however, none of the Thai context. Therefore, this study aims to understand the beliefs of Thai teachers and comparing to other context e.g. Singapore. Previously, the authors conducted a quantitative research on the topic and found that:

- *Learning effort has the positive effect on constructivist pedagogical beliefs.*
- *Authority knowledge has the positive effect on traditional pedagogical beliefs.*
- *Authority knowledge has the positive effect on traditional use of ICT.*
- *Certain knowledge has the positive effect on traditional pedagogical beliefs.*
- *Certain knowledge has the positive effect on constructivist pedagogical beliefs.*
- *Certain knowledge has the positive effect on constructivist use of ICT.*
- *Constructivist pedagogical beliefs have the positive effect on traditional use of ICT.*

- *Constructivist pedagogical beliefs have the positive effect on constructivist use of ICT.* §§§§§§§§§§§

To elaborate the results, a qualitative research was conducted. Interviews were conducted with 5 schools teachers.

2. METHODOLOGY

Questions were drafted and semi-structured interviews were conducted for data collection. 5 school teachers were selected and appointed for interviews. The schools were mix of both in the city and outside to gain the most understanding of the context. Among the interviewees they had worked as teachers for 3 – 7 years. One of the interviewees was a key person to design Chinese courses for local schools in the city. The researchers were both Thai and Chinese; questions and answers were mixed on both languages. However, they were transcribed and translated into English for coding for thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011, p. 10).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Transcribed text was translated and classified into different themes based on its ideas. Themes from coding are here displayed as subtopics as the results from the analysis and to provide evidence, samples of the interviews are displayed along. With the contracts with interviewees to keep their words anonymous; so nicknames are given and displayed for each quote for references.

b. In a traditional culture but their beliefs support constructivism

Teachers make new books for their students by compiling from different sources. They claimed on inappropriate structure and content based on their local culture and student level e.g. a conversation about drinking beer for students. They cannot just follow a solo book for their students. By working on new books they adapt language practice into current situations and some local culture. For example, the textbook should add 微信（Wechat）, 支付宝 (Ali Pay)， 高铁 (High speed train).

Li (from a primary school) and Jin (from a secondary school) found that some exercise is quite too difficult for their students' level. It focuses on linguistic rather than communication, which is their main purpose.

"*I am making an exercise book for my students. I cannot just rely on a solo book. I have to consider the local culture and context with my students' Chinese proficiency and the up-to-date content. I sometimes come across some mistake of a famous textbook; I later even contact to the publisher to report this. Regarding innate ability, I cannot totally ignore it, I have seen my students with different progress; some remain the same level, few getting better, but more getting worse. Effort is*

§§§§§§§§§§§ Note: To see more about the quantitative research paper; it is in the process of publishing at Wireless Personal Communication Journal titled " The Relationship of ICT Integration to Epistemological and Pedagogical Beliefs of Thai Teacher Who Teach Chinese as a Foreign Language: Case Study of School teachers in Chiang Rai, Thailand".

the only reliable approach to gain deep learning; however, external factors also significantly play their roles here: friends and family." (Lin)

It shows that 'Lin' believes in learning effort rather than innate ability and she also raised other factors that influence students' motivation which their social. Friends and family dim their motivation of learning. Her epistemic beliefs support constructivism pedagogy approach.

c. Even the CFL teachers believe the constructivist pedagogy, but they tend to apply traditional teaching

The teachers believe that constructivist pedagogy can make the teaching and learning better but because of the limit teaching hours, the amount of lessons, the students readiness, the school policy including indicators they cannot apply it, they still repeat their practice in traditional way of teaching.

As mentioned by a teacher "*At different grades of students; they have different learning objectives; and here students of a batch are classified into different sections e.g. Science-Math specialized section, language specialized section, and no-specialized section. Each of these sections has their own learning motivation; therefore, tools and activities in classroom are different for them. For Science-Math specialized section, students are skillful for analytical skills, they like to focus on the academic content rather than other activities; as compared to language specialized section; students in this section are more socialized, they are happy to engage in games or group activities which lead them to gain understanding of the content. The last section with no specialization; they need more iteration in order to understand the same content. This group requires more teacher-student interaction.*" (Jin)

The approach introduced by 'Jin', they classify students into different patterns of learning, who are skillful of analytical skill, who are skillful of social skills and non-special skill. They try to provide different classroom activities to serve their needs. Those who are good in analytical skill are quickly to understand content, they can understand content by themselves with little help from teachers; therefore, group activities seems to be distractive for them. In other words, they are not good collaborators; they prefer working alone. Students who in the second group are good in social and by participating group activities make them learn better. They may not be good learners by themselves but they know to team up, to collaborate, and to achieve their common goals. Students from the last group are not in regular learning patterns. They may be find difficulty to follow content and lesson and participation in group activities does not help them much. They require traditional approach many rounds into to understand the content. We can see that Jin can apply constructivism approach for the socialized group but not for the other two groups.

d. Traditional Use of ICT dominates but Constructivist has its own way

All of the teachers think ICT is the strong tools for Chinese teaching and learning. The teachers are mainly using PowerPoint for giving instruction and displaying content. They sometimes play videos

from YouTube (a famous streaming video website of Google) for motivating students. They are advanced in using technology in their daily life but not in classroom activities.

As mentioned by a teacher:

"*As we separate students based on their specialization, we use different ICT tools for them as following: for Science-Math students who like to focus on gaining understanding content we use a lot of slides on Microsoft PowerPoint. The second group who are specialized in language, we use some slide show but with Videos on YouTube and other game applications to shoot on the screen and invite students to participate. The last group is people with no specialization; we use the same tools as the language group but with more teacher interaction.*" (Jin)

Based on requirements of her students, Jin provides different tools to engage with students. A group of students who like to consume content, slide shows are easily to prepare and give to them. They can easily understand with shooting the slide on board with some explanation from teachers. Tools for knowledge transmission are applied here. For socialized group ICT as a tool to keep their motivation and participation. When students engage, they gain understanding of the content. The group with no-specialization, they require ore interaction from teachers to let them understand the lessons.

To summarize, the findings implied that that the CFL teachers in Chiang Rai mostly expressed positive beliefs about ICT and they are likely to apply mixed pedagogical practices of traditional and constructivism approaches. Their ways of using technology also range their purposes of integration from for knowledge transmission, for keep motivation, and for participation.

4. CONCLUSION

The qualitative research findings provided some support to the quantitative data we examined in the research. Based mainly on the Chiang Rai CFL teachers' interviews, the teachers seemed to hold more or less dynamic beliefs about knowledge.

The finding implies that the CFL teachers mostly expressed positive beliefs about ICT and they are likely to apply blended pedagogical practices, but because of barriers they towards to the traditional teaching. They mainly use ICT tools (PowerPoint, Facebook, YouTube) for motivation and Chinese language knowledge transmission. Compare to Singapore teachers (Chai, 2010), Thai teachers adopt ICT tools mainly for the traditional teaching. An emerging practice based on the social constructivist teaching and learning need to be empowered on Thai teachers.

Secondly, even the teachers hold the constructivist pedagogical beliefs, but they tend to be traditional teaching because of insufficient time and TPACK knowledge for class preparation and constructivist instruction. Technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK)-based "activity types" (Ahuja, Chudoba, Kacmar, McKnight, & George, 2007) can help teachers' instructional planning became more student-centered (Harris & Hofer, 2011). This may indicate that the Thai government and educators are supposed to consider the needs for the teacher's professional

development. The TPACK-based teaching activities can be considered as the key point for the further teachers training.

Finally, the educators and government may rethink about the policy of ICT for the schools, while the financial and technological supports also need to be considered.

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